

# Protecting your home against termites.

Many people fail to realise, until it's too late, the extensive amounts of damage that termites cause to modern homes. Since they remain concealed in the wood and enter your home through underground leads it is often not until the damage is extensive and timbers collapse, that you realise you have a problem.

Termites, or white ants as they are sometimes known, cause serious structural damage to timber and other cellulose-based products. The most common species, *Coptotermes acinaciformis*, is in fact the most destructive termite species in the world.

Studies have revealed that on average 1 in every 5 homes are attacked at some stage during their lives by this ruinous insect. In some cases it can be as high as 1 in 3. Clearly it is important to take every action possible to prevent their menace.

The most commonly encountered termites are subterranean termites. Living in large underground nests they travel through the soil and then build mud tunnels to gain access to the timber in your home. Once inside, the worker termites chew up the timber to feed the nest. This frequently leaves timbers hollow inside and structurally unsound.

## Termite protection

An extensive Australian Standard (AS 3660.2) deals with protecting homes from termite attack. This standard provides minimum guidelines for home owners and timber pest managers on termite control and protection. The Building Code of Australia which is administered by local government authorities requires various measures be taken when your home is built.



In the past, persistent pesticides were sprayed underneath slab on ground homes. These have been withdrawn from use, due to community concerns and replaced with acceptable alternatives. Applied correctly these alternative termiticides will help protect your home from future attack. There are also termite baiting systems in use now.

Termites may still gain entry though if you don't take basic steps to help maintain the defences to your home.

## How you can help ensure your home remains safe.

1. Always follow the guidelines and recommendations issued by a Timber Pest Specialist. They are designed to ensure maximum protection.
2. A termite Treated Zone abutting the perimeter walls of your home may be essential to reduce the risk to your home. You must avoid disturbing this Treated Zone. If it is disturbed then entry by subterranean termites is possible. If you have not had this Treated Zone applied yet they your home remains fully exposed to future destruction by termites.
3. Any termite management program can be rendered ineffective if building alterations or additions are made. The construction of pergolas, awnings, verandahs etc can provide a route for concealed entry into the property.
4. With many concrete slab homes it is important that you ensure the edge of the slab is left exposed. Weep holes in between the bricks, found immediately above the slab must also be left exposed. By building up gardens or soil levels over the edge of the slab or over the weep holes you may allow termites to can gain undetected entry into your home and bridge Treated Zones.

5. With suspended floor homes any material that may be conducive to termite infestation, including any form work, timber, tree stumps and similar materials must be removed from the subfloor and away from the external walls of your home.
6. Ensure that termite shields (ant caps) are not damaged or breached in any way (metal strips around the foundation). Termite shields do not prevent termite entry. They do force termites out into the open so they can be detected by regular inspection.
7. Ensure leaking taps, showers, pipes etc under the home or adjacent to it are repaired immediately in order to reduce moisture levels in the subfloor.
8. Ensure that vents to subfloor areas are never blocked. These keep the subfloor dry so termites are not attracted to the area.
9. Do not use untreated timbers to form garden beds or retaining walls as these will attract termites. Untreated timber retaining walls should be replaced.

If you intend to make changes that may affect the protection of your home, as mentioned above, then ensure you contact your Termite specialist first.

**Concrete paving is a great idea provided a Treated Zone is applied prior to its installation.**

You can greatly enhance the security of your home by constructing a one metre wide concrete path around the entire perimeter of your home. If installed correctly termites will have to build a mud tube across the pathway to gain entry and can be easily dealt with.

However, the soil under the path must be treated first. This is done through the installation of a soil Treated Zone by your Termite Specialist before the path is poured.

### **Regular Inspections**

The Australian Standard recommends at least annual inspections. However, more frequent inspections are strongly recommended. Your Timber Pest Specialist will perform these inspections for you.

He will perform a thorough survey of your property, including the garden area and trees where termite nests may be found and provide you with a full written report detailing the results of his inspection. Appropriate recommendations on treatment and measures you should take to help ensure the security of your home will be outlined.

If you find any evidence of termites, damaged timbers or mud workings, then immediately contact your licenced Termite Specialist.

**Do not disturb the workings in any way. Left undisturbed your Termite Specialist will be better able to tailor a control program to suit your home.**



**Termites in mud galleries.**